Vol. VI. Numb: 66

THE OBSERVATOR.

Another Letter from Portſmouth *about Abuſes in Naval-Affairs. The Happineſs of the Conſtitution of* England, *when compar'd with that of* France. *The chief Bulwark of our Liberty, is our Parliament; where no Complaints of Male-Adminiſtration in any Officer, can be ſtifl'd, if People take proper Meaſures, and be not wanting to themſelves.*

From Wednesday, October 15. to Saturday, October 18. 1707.

Country-m. I Hope now, Maſter, we may have a little Time to talk of Naval-Affairs, which I find is neceſſary; for there are ſtill Complaints.

Obſ. Who complains now, *Roger?*

Country-m. The Gentleman who wrote to us lately from *Portſmouth*, Maſter: He takes Notice of what we ſaid upon his laſt, and ſays he has complain'd to thoſe who had Authority to command a Redreſs; but never had an Anſwer, only one of his Letters was ſent back to the Captain complain'd of, who would have abus'd him for it, had not his Courage fail'd him.

Obſ. All that may be, *Roger*: It is not enough that a Complaint be juſt; there's a Deference due to Authority in the Manner of it, and if poſſible, the Complainer ought to have the Facts well atteſted; to do otherwiſe, is to open a Door to Calumny and Slander, which all Governments muſt take Care to avoid: Therefore our Friend ſhould have got the Magiſtrates of the Place, or at leaſt ſome Perſons of known Reputation, to have witneſs'd the Truth of his Complaint, and then there could have been no Suſpicion of Envy or Calumny in the Complainer; but becauſe the Injury done, may be paſt Reparation ere the *Admiralty* here can inquire into the Matter, I ſhould think it proper, *Roger*, (with Submiſſion to Superiors) that either there ſhould be Commiſſioners appointed at thoſe Ports, on Purpoſe to hear ſuch Complaints, and give Redreſs; or that the Magiſtrates of the Town be impower'd to do it; and that it ſhould be criminal for any Sea-Commander whatever, to inſult them for it.

Country-m. I am altogether of your Mind, Maſter; for certainly the Magiſtrates of *Portſmouth* muſt needs know which Way the Wind blows, and are capable to judge when Captains neglect a fair Gale. It's eaſy for them to be inform'd whether Horſes die on Board, and what occaſions it; whether her Majeſty's Ships want Water, or other Neceſſaries; by whoſe Neglect it ſo happens, and the like; whether the Officers attend duly on Board, for the Service of the Queen and the Country. In ſhort, Maſter, it is *Roger*'s Opinion, that if ſuch Neglects be not prevented, the Safety, as well as the Trade of the Nation, may be in Danger.

Obſ. It's very well obſerv'd, *Roger*; and we are not to doubt, but her Majeſty, with her Great Council of Lords and Commons, will inquire into ſuch Abuſes, and redreſs them, when lay'd before them in a proper Manner. It's too much the Concern of our own Nation, and of the whole Alliance, to have any Time or Horſes loſt by Neglect, when our Troops want them in *Portugal*. The Loſs of a Town or two upon the Frontiers of that Kingdom, for want of neceſſary Supplies, may be of ill Conſequence at ſuch a Juncture as this, and put Arguments into the Mouth of the *French* Faction there, that cannot be eaſily anſwer'd. In the mean Time, *Roger*, the Convoy with the Horſes for *Portugal*, was ſail'd before this Letter came to our Hands, ſo that we are to hope, they may arrive in Time; but if it ſhould happen otherwiſe, and that our Government or Merchants ſuffer by the Neglect of any Sea-Commander, there's nothing in our Conſtitution that makes them too great to be complain'd of, or puniſh'd.

Country-m. I think ſo too, Maſter; and *Engliſh* Courage ſeldom uſes to fail to complain of Grievances, or inſiſt on a Redreſs, eſpecially when Madam *Neceſſity* commands it. You know very well, Maſter, what eminent Service that Lady and her Son, Captain *Tom*, have done this Nation, upon extraordinary Occaſions.

Obſ. That's true, *Roger*; but the leſs we need their Help, the better; and bleſſed be God, we never had leſs than now, when we have a Heroine on the Throne, an indulgent Mother to all her Subjects; ſo that it muſt be our own Fault in not complaining, if we labour under any Difficulties which are in her Majeſty's Power to redreſs; and ſince the remoteſt Subject in *England* may have Acceſs to her Majeſty, and her Great Council of Parliament, by giving Inſtructions to their Members, they are much to blame, if they ſuffer her Majeſty or themſelves to be injur'd for Want of early and proper Application.

Country-m. All very right, Maſter; but I have heard of Complaints being ſtifl'd, and of Members being brib'd, to keep them from coming into the Houſe.

Obſ. There's no Doubt, *Roger*, that ſuch Things have happen'd; but have you not alſo heard, that Members, and Speakers too, have been turn'd out of the Houſe of Commons, and that Peers have been impeach'd in the Houſe of Lords, for Bribery? Our Conſtitution is ſo happy, that it affords us a ſpeedy and infallible Cure againſt all ſuch Diſtempers in the Body Politick, ſo long as *the Head is ſound, and the Heart intirely Engliſh*, tho' you and I remember when it was otherwiſe, *Roger*.

Country-m. Yes, Maſter, that we do; for I remember, that Models of Ships of War, with Materials and Stores for them, were ſent into

France,

France, as if the Heart of the Government had been intirely *French*; and that actual War was declar'd against that Monarch, without striking one actual Stroke; and that Parliaments were actually dissolv'd, and Addresses of Abhorrence actually set on foot by our High-flyers, against petitioning for another.

Obs. Very true, *Roger:* Those who are for arbitrary Government, and betraying the Liberties of the People, have several Ways to effect it: Sometimes they are for governing without Parliaments; but that's too gross a Pill for *English* Throats to swallow, and always choak'd the Contrivers; therefore, *Roger*, crafty Ministers found out a way by Bribes and Pensions, fat Posts in the Court, Camp, and Revenue, and by good Dinners, to bring Parliament-men into the Plot against our Constitution. This had well nigh ruin'd *England*, about 30 or 40 Years ago, *Roger*; but no such Thing can be practis'd, when the Head and Heart are sound; therefore 'tis our own Fault, if any just Complaints be now stifl'd; for if a few Members come short of their Duty, or be taken off by indirect Methods, we have all the rest to apply to; and every Member is concern'd to use his Endeavours for redressing Grievances in any other Part of the Kingdom, as well as in those Burroughs or Counties which he represents; and for that Reason, they are dignify'd with the *Glorious Title of the Commons of* England *in Parliament assembl'd.*

Country-m. It's a glorious Title indeed, Master, and attended with a Charge accordingly; which is to be Guardians for the People of *England*, and not Advocates for a Party, or Tools to a Court. We don't send 'em thither to be Whig or Tory, Church-man or Dissenter, to be Under-spur-Leathers to Ministers of State, or to form Cabals against them; we expect they should take Care of All *England*, and inquire into Grievances, and redress 'em, from whatever Hand they come, without Respect of Person or Party. They are to see that the Ballance of our happy Constitution be kept in a due Poise, betwixt our three Estates of Government, the Queen, Lords, and Commons; they are to allow of no dead Weight on any Side, but immediately to throw it off. The Law of God, *Magna Charta*, and the natural Rights of Mankind, are to be the Pole-Star for directing their Course, and keeping our Administration steady. If they had always acted by those Rules, Master, all the Money in *England* would not have been able to bribe them, tho' the whole Treasury had been parcell'd out into Pensions.

Obs. You say very well, *Roger*; for had *France* preserv'd their Parliaments, or meeting of Estates, it would not have been in the Power of their King to have exhausted the Substance of his Dominions, to catch at the Shadow of an Universal Monarchy; he could not have destroy'd a Million of Subjects, and have forc'd so many thousands, with their Families and Effects, into other Countries, for not conforming to the Religion of the State. A She-Favourite had not been his chief Minister of State; nor could a *Pontchartrain* or *Chamillard* have had the sole Management of his Treasury; or an unskilful Admiral, the Command of his *Navy*. His Ships of War must not have lain idle in Harbour, or been sent abroad to no Purpose, whilst his own Merchants were a Prey to his Enemies, or his Sea-Ports insulted. The chief Manager of his Money and Finances, must not have been in Fee with the principal Commissioners of his Revenue, to cover his Bribery, whilst he conceals theirs. He must not have cut off one half of the Sallery allow'd by the Government to such Commissioners, for the Use of his Relations, Misses, and Pimps, on Condition, that they should have Leave to go halves with inferior Officers, in concealing the Frauds of Distillers of Brandy and Spirits, and of the Collectors of the Gabels and Taxes. The Commissioners of his Douane or Customs, and other Imposts, must not have allow'd their Substitutes to play at Cards, Dice, and Bowls, with Merchants, Distillers, and other Tradesmen, who are willing to lose their Money, that the Officers may have a Pretence to say, they never took any Bribe for concealing a Fraud. The Commissioners of his Finances, must not have spent their Weekly Allowance, for taking Care to improve the Revenue, and preventing its being embezzel'd, on their Ladies of Pleasure, at the Wells of *Bourbon*, instead of looking after their inferior Officers; nor must they have bestow'd the Charity-Money, levy'd upon the Officers of the Finances, for the Maintenance of decay'd or superannuated Members of their Society, in Bribes upon their Coach-men, Lackeys, Pimps, and other Tools, while the poor superannuated Officers are turn'd out of their Posts, and robb'd of the Charity, towards which they contributed out of their own Salleries. *Pontchartrain*, by his Authority, could not have protected such notorious Criminals against publick Complaints, nor have made use of the Money of the State, to buy of the chief of the Complainants, or to bribe Members of the Parliament of *Paris*, where the Criminals should have been try'd. Nor must he have refus'd in his own Court, to hear Complaints against such Commissioners as depend upon it. The Parliament, *Roger*, would soon have been at the Bottom of such Practices, and have discover'd the Bribery. Nor should Madam *Maintenon*, with all her Favour, have been able to protect the Marshal *de Villeroy*, or any other Gallant, against the Censure of the Parliament in such a Case. In a Word, *Roger*, it would not have been in the Power of M. *Pontchartrain*, or M. *Chamillard*, to have apply'd the publick Money to other Uses than it was given for, without being oblig'd to account for it; nor durst they have adventur'd to bring a dead Weight from any one Part of the Dominions of *France*, to have protected the Courtiers in doing Injustice to the whole; nor must they have taken such Measures as tended to put the Legislature and Executive Power into the Hands of the Court, which has brought the Tyranny of *France* to its present Height; for the Estates would have been jealous at the very first, when they saw such Men in chief Favour, as had formerly given Proofs of their Enmity, to the Liberty of the Subject, and would never have suffer'd them to have been imploy'd.

Country-m. Now, Master, I see plainly why High-flyers, and Abbettors of absolute Power, have always been against Parliaments, or else for bribing or clogging them with dead Weights. How much is *England* bless'd by her happy Constitution, which guards her against such Practices? God preserve her Majesty, and our Lords and Commons, against all the Enemies of *England*'s Liberty.

Obs. Let all the People say Amen, *Roger.*

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LONDON, Printed for the Use of the Widow of the late Author, JOHN TUTCHIN.